

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino **Josie Gonzales Fifth District**

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**JGFDS-PR-163 ZIMMERMAN ELEMENTARY TEAM TAKES STEPS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ZIMMERMAN ELEMENTARY TAKES STEPS AGAINST CHILDHOOD OBESITY

SAN BERNARDINO – During the next four months, as many as 400 Zimmerman Elementary students will wear pedometers, counting their steps toward healthier living.

San Bernardino County Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales invited the Bloomington school last month to participate in the California Speedway 500. They eagerly accepted the invitation, along with a donation of 400 pedometers to help team members count their steps.

“I extended the invitation to the school because of the alarming statistics regarding childhood obesity, especially in the Bloomington area,” said Supervisor Gonzales.

According to a 2005 report, *The Growing Epidemic: Child Overweight Rates on the Rise in California Assembly Districts*, 29.4% of San Bernardino County students are overweight, with the unincorporated area of Bloomington having the greatest share. The study states that 39.5% of the students in the area are overweight.

“We can teach them how eating right and exercising everyday can be fun and will lead to them becoming strong, healthy adults. The earlier we instill healthy eating habits the better,” said Gonzales. “Fun activities such as jumping rope, playing ball, and after school sports, like soccer, are great ways for the students to reach their 500,000 step goal,” she added.

The contest – sponsored by the California Speedway in Fontana and the Kids Fitness Challenge Foundation – encourages students, teachers, administrators, family and friends each to walk 500,000 steps (250 miles) before February 15, 2007.

Those who reach the goal will be eligible for fun prizes, awards and special recognition. The top participating school will win a free school garden kit, courtesy of Western Growers.

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Teachers Dawn McClelland, Jeremy Wallace and Nicolas Monterroso are organizing the Zimmerman Elementary team. Other teachers plan to incorporate physical activities into their class schedules to encourage their students to get their 500,000 steps.

Creatively, the teachers are combining health with geography. Each week McClelland, Wallace and Monterroso will chart the team's steps along a map of the United States. The team's steps will take the school on an imaginary cross-country trip. The students then will learn about different parts of the country along the pretend journey.

During the school's kick-off assemblies Ms. McClelland told the students how each team member will receive a pedometer, a weekly step log and a newsletter with information on how exercise and eating healthy foods can give them more energy, keep them from getting sick and help them to learn more in school.

For more information on the California Speedway 500 program visit the Kids Fitness Challenge Foundation website at www.kidsfitnesschallenge.com.

The Fifth District includes the unincorporated areas of Bloomington, Muscoy and Arrowhead Farms, the city of Rialto, major portions of the cities of Colton and San Bernardino, and a segment of the city of Fontana.

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